



# PRESS NOTICE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **COLUMBIA MEN PLEAD GUILTY TO FOOD STAMP FRAUD**

**Columbia, South Carolina** ---- United States Attorney Bill Nettles stated today that Ulysses Williams, age 71, George Andrew Williams, age 47, Xavier Roedran Pinckney, age 38, and Jamal Derwin Gaines, age 24, all of Columbia, pled guilty today in federal court in Columbia to Conspiracy to Commit Food Stamp Fraud, a violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 371. United States District Judge Margaret B. Seymour accepted the pleas and will impose sentences at a future hearing.

Evidence presented at the change of plea hearings established that the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, or SNAP, otherwise known as the food stamp program, is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Ulysses Williams owned and operated B&B Fruit and Vegetable, and George Williams owned and operated Fresh Open Air Market. Both businesses were located in the Columbia area and were known to purchase SNAP benefits for cash and to allow the purchase of non-food items such as cigarettes and clothing using EBT (electronic benefits transfer) cards.

Undercover operations revealed that Xavier Roedran Pinckney and Jamal Derwin Gaines manned the registers at the two stores. When individuals came in to buy cigarettes or other low-priced items, Pinckney and Gaines would ring up the transactions for around \$80 to \$100, give the individual half the money and keep half. Both Williams defendants monitored these transactions and provided the cash to hand out.

The total loss amount for the case is just over \$4,000,000.

Mr. Nettles stated the maximum penalty the defendants can receive is a fine of \$250,000 and/or imprisonment for five years, plus a special assessment of \$100.

The case was investigated by agents of the Internal Revenue Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Richland County Sheriff's Office. Assistant United States Attorney Winston D. Holliday, Jr., of the Columbia office is prosecuting the case.

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